City of Seattle

Department of Construction and Inspections

Nathan Torgelson, Director

DESIGN REVIEW

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number:	3024206
Address:	8541 15th Ave NW
Applicant:	David Neiman, Neiman Taber Architecture
Date of Meeting:	Monday, June 19th 2017
Board Members Present:	Dale Kutzera (Chair) Chris Bell Marc Angelillo
Board Members Absent:	Keith Walzak Emily McNichols
SDCI Staff Present:	David L. Landry, AICP, Land Use Planner

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Neighborhood Commercial 3 Pedestrian Designation Zone (NC3 P-40)

Nearby Zones: North – NC3 P-40
South – NC3 P-40
East – NC3 P-40
West - LR-3

Overlay Districts: Crown Hill Residential Urban Village
Frequent Transit Corridor

Project Area: 6,854 square feet (sq. ft.)

Current Development:
The proposal site is located on the west side of 15th Ave NW, midblock, between NW 87th St. to the north and NW 86th St. to the south. The site is currently occupied by a single-story masonry commercial building built in 1946.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:
The proposal site is located within the Crown Hill neighborhood which is within the Crown Hill Residential Urban Village Ballard a designated pedestrian zone, east of Ballard and west of Greenwood. The Crown Hill Cemetery was one of the early uses in the area. Residents began to move into the area in high numbers after the conclusion of World War II. Much of the architecture and many houses reflect the character of that era, including a fair number of single-level brick houses with distinct front yards. In the 1980's and 90's, the area saw a large influx of more people resulting in the construction of several apartments, condominiums and townhouses.

The proposal site is located on the west side of 15th Ave NW a primary commercial arterial in Northwest Seattle which is an auto-oriented street that was partially designated a pedestrian zone in 2013. Most of 15th Ave NW is primarily comprised of single-story masonry commercial development on either side of the street that transitions to single family housing one block to the west; along 16th Ave NW and townhouse, duplex, apartments and condominiums one block to the east along Mary Ave NW.

Access:
Access to the site is currently via a curb cut from 15th Avenue NW or via a narrow and unimproved alley way on the west side of the site.

Environmentally Critical Areas:
The site is not located in an Environmentally Critical Area.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
This is a proposal to construct a four-story building containing 40 residential units and 2,131 sq. ft. of retail space located at ground level. Existing building to be demolished.

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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3024206) at the following website:
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/news/events/DesignReview/SearchPastReviews/default.aspx

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at SDCI:

Mailing Address: **Public Resource Center**
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

PUBLIC COMMENT

At the EDG meeting, the following comments were provided:

- Concerned with the lack of parking.
- Concerned that the square footage of the project is quite small.
- Asked what building was being removed.
- Wondered what the future impact might be if development extends to 16th Ave NW.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance.

1. **Massing and Design Concept:** The Board discussed the following concerns with the massing options, but ultimately gave guidance to proceed with the preferred scheme, Option C. **(CS2-B-2, CS2-D-1, CS2-D-4, DC2-A-1, DC1-A-2, DC3-A-1)**
    a. Given the proposed development program, the Board questioned whether Options A and B were actually viable options.
    b. The design rationale for the "H" pattern floor plan needs to be clarified. The Board asked why the applicant did not go for a larger footprint that fills the whole site with the living units facing outward toward the right of ways.
    c. While noting that residential unit sizes are outside of the purview of design review, the Board appreciated that Option C had larger units and that the project was being designed for workforce housing.

2. **Trash and Bicycle Storage**: The Board gave guidance to provide a direct route between the solid waste storage area and the alley, instead of the proposed circulation requiring solid waste to be moved through the building for collection at the alley. The Board observed that the trash room seem generously sized and gave guidance to relocate bicycle parking in that area instead in the lobby area, if possible. The Board conceded that bike riders would take their bikes out to 15th Ave NW instead of out along the alley which is currently unpaved, so direct bike access to 15th Ave NW makes sense. (**PL4-B-2, PL4-B-3, DC2-D-1, DC3-A-1, DC4-C-1)**

3. **Amenity Space**: After some discussion, the Board gave guidance to increase the amenity space. The Board observed that projects like often include a large roof deck or a large amenity room inside the building. The amenity area outside the rear door, adjacent to the alley and the trash pick-up area, would not provide sufficient quality or quantity of amenity space for residents. The Board gave guidance to design the amenity spaces to be usable and attractive, designed to encourage use. The Board specified that the amenity space should not serve as space for solid waste circulation or be located adjacent to solid waste storage or staging areas, and placing it adjacent to an unimproved alley may discourage use of the space. Board members suggested that a quick fix might be to flip the locations of the trash room and the electrical room. The Board also suggested the space could be placed adjacent to the lobby area. (**CS1-B, PL3-C-3, DC1-A-1, DC1-A-2, DC2-D-1, DC3-A-1, DC4-C, DC4-D, DC4-A)**

4. **Elevator**:
    a. While recognizing that that the internal circulation issues may be out of the Board's purview, the Board had difficulty accepting the idea of not including an elevator in a four-story building. The Board felt this arrangement would segregate the able bodied from the non-able bodied, forcing people to live on a specific floor, contrary to the concept of universal access. (**PL4-A-1, PL4-B, DC3-A-1)**
    b. The Board felt that the circulation patter between the lower and level units in relationship to the placement of the trash room and its relationship to the outdoor amenity space was awkward. The Board this relationship could improve with the introduction of an elevator. As such the Board strongly suggested that the applicant look at options for an elevator which they felt could solve some of the awkwardness of location of the trash room and the outdoor amenity (**PL4-A-1, DC4-A-1)**

5. **Retail Space**: The Board approved of the retail space location with the residential entry to one side and not interrupting the retail space. They also approved of the smaller designated spaces as flexible with lots of entries to the street, the overhead canopy, and the expanded sidewalk width. (**PL3-C-1, PL3-C-2, DC1-A-3, DC4-A)**

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

Staff recommendation on the requested departure will be based on the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guidelines priorities and achieve a better overall project design than could be achieved without the departure. Staff recommendation will be reserved until the final meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance the following departures listed below were requested for Options A and B. No departures were requested for massing Option C, the applicant's preferred massing option.

1. **Setback Requirements (SMC 23.47A.008.B.3):** The Code requires that for a structure containing a residential use, a setback is required along any side or rear lot line that abuts a lot in a residential zone or that is across an alley from a lot in a residential zone, or that abuts a lot that is zoned both commercial and residential if the commercial zoned portion of the abutting lot is less than 50 percent of the width or depth of the lot, as follows:

   a. Fifteen feet for portions of structures above 13 feet in height to a maximum of 40 feet; and
   b. For each portion of a structure above 40 feet in height, additional setback at the rate of 2 feet of setback for every 10 feet by which the height of such portion exceeds 40 feet.

   Options A and B include a request for a 10 foot setback from the alley centerline in lieu of the 15 foot setback requirement to allow for improved daylighting to the interior courtyard units and common area spaces located at grade.

   The Board was not in support of this departure request as they did not agree with the justification that the request made the design for massing Options A or B better.

2. **Street-Level Development Standards (SMC 23.47A.008):** The Code requires that non-residential uses shall extend an average depth of at least 30 feet and a minimum depth of 15 feet from the street-level street-facing facade.

   The applicant is requesting that the depth of commercial spaces be reduced by approximately 6-9", to an average and minimum depth of approximately 23'-3" which would still comply with the minimum depth of 15' from the street-level street-facing façade. The proposed justification is that the design would provide significant transparency and visual connectivity from the sidewalk into the project. This would animate the pedestrian environment with an improved entry court, and provide a direct visual connection to the portion of the lobby that projects in between the two commercial spaces.

   The Board was not in support of this departure request as they did not agree with the justification that the request made the design for massing Options B better.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the Design Review website.

PUBLIC LIFE

CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.

CS1-B SUNLIGHT AND NATURAL VENTILATION

CS1-B-1. Sun and Wind: Take advantage of solar exposure and natural ventilation available onsite where possible. Use local wind patterns and solar gain as a means of reducing the need for mechanical ventilation and heating where possible.

CS1-B-2. Daylight and Shading: Maximize daylight for interior and exterior spaces and minimize shading on adjacent sites through the placement and/or design of structures on the site.

CS1-B-3. Managing Solar Gain: Manage direct sunlight falling on south and west facing facades through shading devices and existing or newly planted trees.

CS2-C. RELATIONSHIP TO BLOCK

CS2-B-2. Mid-Block Sites: Look to the uses and scales of adjacent buildings for clues about how to design a mid-block building. Continue a strong street-edge where it is already present, and respond to datum lines created by adjacent buildings at the first three floors. Where adjacent properties are undeveloped or underdeveloped, design the party walls to provide visual interest through materials, color, texture, or other means.

CS2-D. HEIGHT, BULK AND SCALE

CS2-D-1. Existing Development and Zoning: Review the height, bulk, and scale of neighboring buildings as well as the scale of development anticipated by zoning for the area to determine an appropriate complement and/or transition. Note that existing buildings may or may not reflect the density allowed by zoning or anticipated by applicable policies.

CS2-D-2. Existing Site Features: Use changes in topography, site shape, and vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent proper-ties; for example siting the greatest mass of the building on the lower part of the site or using an existing stand of trees to buffer building height from a smaller neighboring building.

CS2-D-3. Zone Transitions: For projects located at the edge of different zones, provide an appropriate transition or complement to the adjacent zone(s). Projects should create a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zone and the proposed development. Factors to consider:

a. Distance to the edge of a less (or more) intensive zone;
b. Differences in development standards between abutting zones;
c. The type of separation from adjacent properties (e.g. separation by property line only, by an alley or street or open space, or by physical features such as grade change);
d. Adjacencies to different neighborhoods or districts; adjacencies to parks, open spaces, significant buildings or view corridors; and
e. Shading to or from neighboring properties.

CS2-D-4. Massing Choices: Strive for a successful transition between zones where a project abuts a less intense zone. In some areas, the best approach may be to lower the building height, break up the mass of the building, and/or match the scale of adjacent properties in building detailing. It may be appropriate in other areas to differ from the

scale of adjacent buildings but preserve natural systems or existing features, enable better solar exposure or site orientation, and/or make for interesting urban form.

CS2-D-5. Respect for adjacent Sites: Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

PUBLIC LIFE

PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

PL3-C RETAIL EDGES

PL3-C-1. Porous Edge: Engage passersby with opportunities to interact visually with the building interior using glazing and transparency. Create multiple entries where possible and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.

PL3-C-2. Visibility: Maximize visibility into the building interior and merchandise displays. Consider fully operational glazed wall-sized doors that can be completely opened to the street, increased height in lobbies, and/or special lighting for displays.

PL3-C-3. Ancillary Activities: Allow space for activities such as sidewalk vending, seating, and restaurant dining to occur. Consider setting structures back from the street or incorporating space in the project design into which retail uses can extend.PL4 Active Transportation: Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.

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PL4-A. ENTRY LOCSATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

PL4-A-1. Serving all Modes of Travel: Provide safe and convenient access points for all modes of travel.

PL4-A-2. Connections to All Modes: Site the primary entry in a location that logically relates to building uses and clearly connects all major points of access.

PL4-B. PLANNING AHEAD FOR BICYCLISTS

PL4-B-1. Early Planning: Consider existing and future bicycle traffic to and through the site early in the process so that access and connections are integrated into the project along with other modes of travel.

PL4-B-2. Bike Facilities: Facilities such as bike racks and storage, bike share stations, shower facilities and lockers for bicyclists should be located to maximize convenience, security, and safety.

PL4-B-3. Bike Connections: Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project. Design bicycling access points so that they relate to the street grid and include information about connections to existing trails and infrastructure where possible. Also consider signage, kiosks, building lobbies, and bicycle parking areas, where provided, as opportunities to share bicycling information.

DESIGN CONCEPT

DC1 Project Uses and Activities: Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

DC1-A ARRANGEMENT OF INTERIOR USES

DC1-A-1 Visibility: Locate uses and services frequently used by the public in visible or prominent areas, such as at entries or along the street front.

DC1-A-2 Gathering Places: Maximize the use of any interior or exterior gathering spaces by considering the following:

a. a location at the crossroads of high levels of pedestrian traffic;
b. proximity to nearby or project-related shops and services; and
c. amenities that complement the building design and offer safety and security when used outside normal business hours.

DC1-A-3 Flexibility: Build in flexibility so the building can adapt over time to evolving needs, such as the ability to change residential space to commercial space as needed.

DC1-A-4 Views and Connections: Locate interior uses and activities to take advantage of views and physical connections to exterior spaces and uses, particularly activities along sidewalks, parks or other public spaces.

DC2 Architectural Concept: Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

DC2-A MASSING

DC2-A-1 Site Characteristics and Uses: Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space. In addition, special situations such as very large sites, unusually shaped sites, or sites with varied topography may require particular attention to where and how building massing is arranged as they can accentuate mass and height.

DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects. Consider creating recesses or indentations in the building envelope; adding balconies, bay windows, porches, canopies or other elements; and/or highlighting building entries.

DC2-B ARCHITECTURAL AND FAÇADE COMPOSITION

DC2-B-2. Blank Walls: Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians. These may include:

a. newsstands, ticket booths and flower shops (even if small or narrow);
b. green walls, landscaped areas or raised planters;
c. wall setbacks or other indentations;
d. display windows; trellises or other secondary elements;
e. art as appropriate to area zoning and uses; and/or terraces and landscaping where retaining walls above eye level are avoidable.

DC2-D SCALE AND TEXTURE

DC2-D-1. Human Scale: Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior

spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept. Pay special attention to the first three floors of the building in order to maximize opportunities to engage the pedestrian and enable an active and vibrant street front.

DC2-D-2. Texture: Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or "texture," particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

DC3 Open Space Concept: Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.

DC3-A OPEN SPACE USES AND ACTIVITIES

DC3-A-1 Interior/Exterior Fit: Develop an open space concept in conjunction with the architectural concept to ensure that interior and exterior spaces relate well to each other and support the functions of the development.

DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

DC4-A BUILDING MATERIALS

DC4-A-1. Exterior Finish Materials: Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

DC4-A-2. Climate Appropriateness: Select durable and attractive materials that will age well in Seattle's climate, taking special care to detail corners, edges, and transitions. Highly visible features, such as balconies, grilles and railings should be especially attractive, well-crafted and easy to maintain. Pay particular attention to environments that create harsh conditions that may require special materials and details, such as marine areas or open or exposed sites.

DC4-C LIGHTING

DC4-C-1. Functions: Use lighting both to increase site safety in all locations used by pedestrians and to highlight architectural or landscape details and features such as entries, signs, canopies, plantings, and art.

DC4-C-2. Avoiding Glare: Design project lighting based upon the uses on and off site, taking care to provide illumination to serve building needs while avoiding off-site night glare and light pollution.

DC4-D TREES, LANDSCAPE AND HARDSCAPE MATERIALS

DC4-D-1. Choice of Plant Materials: Reinforce the overall architectural and open space design concepts through the selection of landscape materials. Choose plants that will emphasize or accent the design, create enduring green spaces, and be appropriate to particular locations taking into account solar access, soil conditions, and adjacent patterns of use. Select landscaping that will thrive under urban conditions.

DC4-D-2. Hardscape Materials: Use exterior courtyards, plazas, and other hard surfaced areas as an opportunity to add color, texture, and/or pattern and enliven public areas through the use of distinctive and durable paving materials. Use permeable materials wherever possible.

DC4-D-3. Long Range Planning: Select plants that upon maturity will be of appropriate size, scale, and shape to contribute to the site as intended. It may be necessary to create a landscaping plan for various stages of plant maturity, such as 5, 10, and 20 year plans in order to ensure the landscaping will perform and function as needed over the life of the project.

DC4-D-4. Place Making: Create a landscape design that helps define spaces with significant elements such as trees.

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.